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THE MONITOR-SUBJECT RELATIONSHIP: A PERSPECTIVE ON PREP AND EXPLORER SESSIONS

by Gusteena L. Anderson, M.S.W.

Gusteena L. Anderson joined TMI in November of 1988. Prior to this she was self-employed and working as an Explorer for TMI. She brings to the Institute a diverse background in the health field, including having been administrative director of inpatient psychiatric services at Boston University Medical Center. Ms. Anderson has a B.S. in psychology and a master's degree in social work.

Gusteena Anderson initiated her talk by reviewing the evolution of laboratory sessions at the Institute. She noted that the first monitor was, of course, Bob Monroe, who provided a foundation for the monitor-subject relationship during sessions in New York State; Richmond, Va.; the Whistlefield Research Facility (a lab 12 miles north of TMI's current location, where the term "Explorer" was first used); and the current TMI laboratory when it opened in February 1984. In those various locales thousands of sessions have been recorded, with the goal of the EXPLORER Program always foremost—to discern information about time, space, and beyond. She said the latest evolution in lab sessions is the PERSONAL RESOURCES EXPLORATION PROGRAM (PREP), started in January of 1989, which is geared more toward gathering personal information for the individual in the booth. Ms. Anderson was one of several who began training for the role of PREP monitor in November of 1988. She explained that the training was not simply to acquaint monitors-to-be with the various knobs and buttons that are pushed or the readouts that are observed during a PREP session, but to also help them learn the "feel of a PREP session from both sides so they might better relate to any given individual's experiences in the booth."

She described the basic steps in a PREP session: 1) Before the subject enters the booth, the monitor conducts a pre-session interview. This discussion includes defining the subject's expectations; allowing the monitor to determine the language and terminology of the subject (for smooth communication during the session); determining and addressing any fears, anxieties, or concerns the subject might have; identifying any specific issues the subject might wish to delve into and building a level of comfort and trust between the two parties. Ms. Anderson noted that with a team of five monitors, the so-called "random" pairing of monitor and subject always seems to produce a rapport or "fit." 2) The all-important step of directing the subject to the bathroom to avoid an interruption of the session. 3) Connecting electrodes to measure the subject's Skin Potential Voltage (SPV), Galvanic Skin Response (GSR), and Skin Temperature (TEMP), which give the monitor a tool for noting changes with the subject. Ms. Anderson said that TEMP is a good basic indicator of relaxation and SPV and GSR taken

together can be indicators of mental and/or emotional activity. The readings help the monitor determine when to question a subject during a session. However, the readings are not a substitute for maintaining intuitive contact with a subject. 4) The booth session itself. This calls for the monitor to sustain that intuitive contact with the subject and his/her experience while also handling the technical aspects of the session such as mixing the Hemi-Sync® signals and observing the instrumentation. 5) Debriefing, during which the subject and monitor review what occurred during the session, including review of the computer printout of the electrode readings.

Then, based on her experience as both a subject and a monitor, Ms. Anderson gave some pointers for anyone approaching a laboratory session, a tape exercise, or simply a meditation. She said “trying” and “doing” are concepts that relate to the physical self, or ego. In creating a nonphysical experience, one simply expresses a willingness and “allows” it to happen. Since the ego’s “home” is the physical body, it fears nonphysical activity as a threat and will move to block such activity with restlessness, discomfort, muscle cramps, etc. In essence, that’s the ego saying, “You’re not paying attention to me. I don’t like what’s going on and I want it to stop!” The best way around ego resistance, according to Ms. Anderson, is to acknowledge the ego, assure it the body is safe and comfortable, tell it it can stay with that safety and comfort, and that you’ll be back. She added that one must not become complacent—one must always choose new, evermore-challenging levels of discovery and exploration to move toward a goal of becoming conscious each and every moment.

Ms. Anderson concluded by saying that the guidelines of willingness and “allowing,” and the goal of becoming conscious in each moment apply not only to lab and tape sessions, but also to full physical waking reality.

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